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Chicago Confidential by Melissa Harris
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Chicago via Paris

A delegation of Chicago business leaders is in Paris this week presenting a draft of an in-depth study on improving the tri-state economy to the prestigious Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

It sounds boring. But the pictures posted on entrepreneur Howard Tullman's blog (tullman.blogspot.com) reveal that the delegation got to meet and hear from Google Executive Chairman Eric Schmidt and take in some stunning architecture.

Tullman, via an email from Paris, said that Renee Derem-Johnson, who was married to Chicagoan George Johnson (of Johnson Products fame) for a short time in the 1990s and a recipient of France's Legion of Honor, has been one of "the key trip helpers," opening "many doors for us with everyone in the city." Tullman described her as "a sorta Auntie Mame character here."

"The Secretary General of the OECD told us that he feels totally surrounded by us -- the U.S. President and Secretary of State are from Illinois, and the U.S. Ambassador to France (Charles Rivkin) is from Chicago and went to Francis Parker High School," Tullman wrote.

Tullman is CEO of the Tribeca Flashpoint Media Arts Academy, a two-year school for digital media training. The French government has invited the academy's parent company, Tribeca Enterprises, to participate in a feasibility study for the construction of a cultural complex on the Ile Seguin, an island in the Seine River in the Paris suburbs and the site of a shuttered Renault factory. (The buildings were torn down in 2005.)

Tullman said the Ile Seguin project was "the second reason" he was going to Paris.

Melissa Harris can be reached at mmharris@tribune.com or 312-222-4582. Twitter @chiconfidential

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